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NEWS RELEASE

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STATE TO ATTEMPT TO EXTINGUISH COAL MINE FIRE

A more than 55-year-old coal mine fire has been targeted for extinction. The Utah Division of Oil, Gas and Mining's Abandoned Mine Reclamation Program has begun plans to extinguish the Maclean underground coal mine fire. The mine is located about five miles west of Helper.

Coal mining began at the Maclean Mine in 1922. The fire started in 1946 and has since thwarted all attempts to put it out. Mining continued in unaffected parts of the mine until 1966.

"Little did I know that I'd be trying to put out a fire that has been burning since long before I was born," mused project manager Paul Wisniewski. "But, if successful we'll be able to protect the public from the dangers associated with the fire, preserve the coal as a resource, and reduce damage to the environment."

The Maclean Fire Suppression Project will use modern drilling equipment and a newly developed fire-suppression agent in an attempt to finally snuff it out. An earlier attempt to cut off oxygen to the fire was unsuccessful.

Among the hazards that can be found in the area of the Maclean Mine are smoke, noxious gases, and deep fissures that have developed as a result of the burning coal seam and subsequent collapse of underground workings.

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